

## State of Louisiana Referendum Notice Medicare Only Coverage

Recent legislation allows you and other state employees hired prior to April 1, 1986, to elect to be covered by Medicare when you turn 65. Your colleagues hired after that date already pay the 1.45 percent Medicare tax and will be eligible for Medicare when they turn 65.

### ***What is Medicare?***

Medicare is a national health insurance program for people 65 years of age and older, certain younger disabled people and people with kidney disease. Generally, you are eligible for Medicare if you **or your spouse** worked at least 10 years in Medicare-covered employment (and paid the Medicare tax), and you are 65 years old.

### ***Why should I consider paying to become eligible for Medicare?***

Even if you already have other health insurance coverage, Medicare coverage can be helpful to you, because:

- Your health insurance's lifetime maximum will last longer, due to the additional coverage. This is an important consideration for people who, unfortunately, may have a serious illness requiring expensive treatment.
- Your coinsurance payments may be less, due to the additional coverage.
- You will have a much greater network of hospitals and doctors available to you, anywhere in the country.

### ***How do I go about choosing to pay my Medicare tax?***

You and other eligible employees will receive a selection form, which is called a *Medicare Coverage Ballot*. On this form to be mailed in mid-September, you can elect or decline to be covered by Medicare. This whole process is called a *Divided Vote Referendum*, because your vote affects only you. This letter is the required 90-day notice of your Medicare Referendum.

If you vote **YES**, Medicare taxes (1.45 percent) will be withheld from payroll payments effective October 1, 2005. Your ballot must be returned by September 30, 2005. Attached is a sample ballot for you to study. Please do not return this sample ballot, because it is not an official document.

**Be careful when you consider your Medicare election. It is an irrevocable election, which means you can never change your decision.**

***What do I do if I need more information?***

The Social Security Administration, which oversees Medicare, will be holding regional meetings between June 15 and September 15 to explain Medicare eligibility. You can contact your Human Resources Office for the dates and times of meetings in your area.